

- 1) Let's get down to brass tacks. None of us here is a Philadelphia lawyer; we're all just plain folks, trying to see our way clear. There's been a lot of high-falutin' talk about "economic implications" and such like, but the plain fact is that if they build that dam here it will cost money we just don't have. I'm against it--we're all against it.
- 2) People have been trying for centuries to disprove the claims of astrology, and no one has ever succeeded. So, we must conclude that the claims of astrology are true.
- 3) In all times and places, in every culture and civilization, people have believed in the existence of some sort of deity. Therefore, a supernatural being must exist.
- 4) You must believe with me that this woman is guilty of the crime for which she is accused, for if you don't find her guilty of it, she'll be released and you may end up being her next victim.
- 5) No one's written to object to the peace terms. So there's no reason whatever to believe the country is not solidly behind them.
- 6) When you've got a better theory, you can criticize mine.
- 7) An ad for Bohemian beer: If you had to name the 3 finest beers in the world, what would the other 2 be?
- 8) Drivers who drive alertly are good drivers because they're ready for anything. They think ahead. Safe drivers take precautions against the unexpected.
- 9) From a Ku Klux Klan circular: Every criminal, every gambler, every thug, every libertine, every girl ruiner, every home wrecker, every wife beater, every dope peddler, every moonshiner, every crooked politician, every pagan Papist priest, every shyster lawyer, every K. of C., every white slaver, every brothel madam, every Rome controlled newspaper, every black spider--is fighting the Klan. Think it over. Which side are you on?
- 10) According to Freud we're often frustrated because our sex drives are blocked; and they become blocked apparently because we're thwarted in our desires.
- 11) Husband: "I'm not jealous; I just don't like her speaking to everyone!"
- 12) Newscaster: "It seems to me now more than ever before in our history, one is either for law enforcement or against it, either for mob rule or for the law, either loves a cop or hates her."
- 13) Celebrating Christmas is very un-Christian and downright pagan, because Christmas started out as a pagan celebration.
- 14) From a fund-raising letter sent out by televangelist Pat Robertson: Supporters of the Equal Rights Amendment are not really after equal rights for women: Their actual goal is to destroy the family and encourage women to leave their husbands, kill their children, destroy capitalism, become lesbians, and practice witchcraft. [So, he concluded that people ought to oppose the ERA.]
- 15) [Part of an argument against adding fluoride to the public water supply.] "If the "experts" decide today that we should have fluorides in our tea, coffee, frozen orange juice, lemonade, and every cell of our bodies, what's in store for us tomorrow? What about vitamin C in the water, considered by some to much more important than fluoride? What about tranquilizers to avoid civil disorder? What about birth-control chemicals to be routed to water in certain ethnic neighborhoods? When the time comes, of course, you can be sure it will be done for "your comfort and safety.'"
- 16) Either there truly is a Loch Ness Monster, or a lot of good upright Scots with no motive for lying are telling outrageous lies.
- 17) William F. Buckley: "Now the anti-handgun fundamentalists will tell you that the mere presence of a loaded pistol means that Mr. Finnegan is going to get drunk and shoot Mrs. Finnegan. Or that when Miss Finnegan sneaks in to pay a surprise visit to her mother and father, suddenly she will be dead, taken for an intruder. Or that the Finnegan grandchild, age 6, will one day play with the pistol, it will go off, and there will be tragedy."
- 18) Abortion is always wrong; for it's always wrong to voluntarily and purposefully destroy a living and growing and developing human fetus.
- 19) Some people question whether our government is sufficiently concerned about the safety of nuclear power plants. Obviously our government *does* take great care about the safety of nuclear power plants, for our government allows many nuclear power plants to operate, and our government certainly wouldn't allow nuclear power plants to operate if they weren't safe.
- 20) Pay no attention to those American Tobacco Institute arguments against restrictions on smoking. You shouldn't take their arguments seriously; after all, those arguments are bought and paid for by the tobacco industry.

- 21) Today it's abortion, but tomorrow it'll be the mentally ill, and then the infirm and the aged--or anyone else considered undesirable.
- 22) Two years ago I publicly declared she was guilty of falsifying her income tax return, and she's never sued me for perjury. Is this not an open admission of my charge?
- 23) Religion began with magic and animism. Religion is therefore nothing but nonsense.
- 24) Juanita argued that bluegrass is the best food for cattle in the Midwest, citing her mother's success with bluegrass on the family farm in Illinois. Sammy responds angrily to Juanita by saying, "If you think that bluegrass is so good, you must think all those other farmers who raise pigs and goats and horses are jerks for growing something else on their land. I think it's really arrogant of you to accuse everybody else of being a jerk. If anybody is the jerk it's you, not them. So you're wrong about bluegrass."
- 25) 2 candidates for public office are debating in a public forum: #1: "If I'm elected, I promise to do everything I can to make our streets safe enough so that our wives can walk the streets at night." #2: "What is it you want to do--make hookers out of our wives?"
- 26) No, I don't want my boys to join the Boy Scouts. Did you know that the Boy Scouts were organized as a paramilitary organization? They even trained the young boys in accordance with a military scouting manual. The "scouts" in "Boy Scouts" literally refers to *military* scouts. None of my children is going to join such an organization with my blessing.
- 27) Presidential candidate in a television interview: "We're going to win this election. We've got the spirit, the determination, and the confidence--and most important of all, we believe in ourselves."
- 28) I really can't take your arguments seriously, son. A 16-year old just hasn't lived long enough to know what life is all about.
- 29) God must exist; otherwise, life would be unbearable.
- 30) I think that capital punishment for murderers and rapists is quite justified; there are a number of good reasons for putting to death people who commit such crimes.
- 31) Did you vote for him for President because he's a Democrat or because he promised to reorganize and simplify the federal bureaucracy?
- 32) Anyone who eats meat tacitly condones the killing of animals. We might just as well condone the killing of human beings, for how do we draw the line between one form of animal life and another?
- 33) A: A Christian would never drink alcoholic beverages. B: That's just not true. I know several Christians who occasionally take a drink. In fact, I know some Christian ministers who do. A: Then, as far as I'm concerned, they couldn't be real Christians.
- 34) Mr. Baker cannot be regarded as a competent music critic, because he's very biased. He's biased against all form of modern, especially atonal, music. I think that the reason he doesn't like modern music is that he's too uninformed to appreciate it; he simply doesn't have the qualities needed to make sound artistic judgments.
- 35) Do you really expect me to *dignify* your questions about my proposal by answering them? They simply confirm what I've always thought about you anyway. Your thinking is shallow, naive and uninformed. And I feel that you're wasting my time.
- 36) The voters of Massachusetts overwhelmingly defeated a proposed gun-control law in the state, which proves that gun control is really a rotten idea.
- 37) An ad for Dr. Pepper: I'm a Pepper, he's a Pepper, she's a Pepper, we're all Peppers--wouldn't you like to be a Pepper, too?
- 38) I know that you're not a wealthy man, but I hope that doesn't embarrass you. There's nothing wrong with being poor.
- 39) We'll reject Ms. Jones's suggestion for increasing the efficiency of our colleges. As a manufacturer, she can't be expected to realize that our aim is to educate the youth, not make a profit.
- 40) If you disagree with me, you don't understand what I'm saying.
- 41) There must be a life after death, because almost all people desire it. It is a part of the very nature of human beings to desire it. If there were no life after death, then why would all humans desire it? Like the desires for food, water, and sex, all of which are satiable, the desire for life after death is universal.
- 42) Proponent: Unless we construct a power plant in this area within the next 10 years, we will not be able to meet the significantly growing demand for electrical power. Opponent: What you're saying is that you couldn't care less what happens to the plant life and wildlife in this area or even to human lives that might be dislocated by the building of this dam.
- 43) Professor: I don't permit questions in my class, because if I allow one student to ask a question, then everyone starts asking questions, and the first thing you know, there's not enough time for my lecture.

44) Amy: This college is very paternalistic in its student policies. Shakira: What reasons do you have for saying that? Amy: Because they treat the students like children.

45) I didn't see any "No Trespassing" sign, so I assumed that it was alright to walk through this field.

SOME COMMENTS ON THE FALLACIES

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN APPEAL TO POPULARITY & COMMON PRACTICE:

The difference between these 2 fallacies is that in Common Practice, you're always trying to JUSTIFY something that's considered WRONG somehow (e.g., it's illegal, immoral, impolite, etc.). In other words, this line of reasoning urges us to accept or ignore a questionable action because others are doing it (the action is common).

In Appeal to Popularity, you're not trying to claim that some action that looks wrong really isn't because lots of people do the same sort of thing, rather, you're simply pointing out that a belief is true or false because that's what many people think.

Actually, Common Practice lies somewhere between Appeal to Popularity and Two Wrongs Make a Right (moves reminiscent of these two are made).

BURDEN OF PROOF

Remember, with Burden of Proof, we emphasize not the evidence FOR a thesis, but the LACK of evidence against it. E.g., there must be other life in the universe since no one has proven there isn't. Note that this SAME line of reasoning can support the other side of the issue, too (that there is no other life). This is a good sign that this line of reasoning CAN'T support the conclusion if we can both prove and disprove that same claim with the same line of reasoning.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that because someone can't DISPROVE someone else's position, that that inability to disprove actually counts as some sort of proof. E.g., you can't prove that you've never murdered someone so I use your inability to disprove the claim that you HAVE killed someone as if I get to count that inability as evidence to support/prove my claim.

Just because we can't prove that something is true, does not mean it has to be false. And just because we can't prove something is false does not MAKE it true.

STRAW MAN

The key to this fallacy is to realize that a SUBSTITUTION has occurred. Someone has substituted a different, usually highly objectionable, issue for the real one. E.g., Anna: "There is no logical, moral, or legal justification for discriminating against a person on the basis of gender. Yet there is still legally sanctioned sex discrimination going on against persons in many areas of our culture. So, yes, I think there still may be a need for something like an Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution." Joe: "Look, if you want men and women to have to use the same public restrooms, you go right ahead and support it. The way I see it, you women just don't want to do housework anymore." Joe has misrepresented Anna's argument. He's not only drawn an unwarranted inference from it (the stuff about housework), but he's oversimplified it beyond recognition.

You have to play fair when characterizing your opponent's position in order to be talking about the same thing. You can't portray someone's position any way you want and still be guaranteed to be talking about the same issue.

Another common form of Straw Man pseudo-reasoning is to take a complex issue and reduce it to a misrepresentative oversimplification. E.g., if someone describes the Equal Rights Amendment as basically a bra-burning issue, she has committed a Straw Man. Bertrand Russell, the late British philosopher, did this when he characterized Christianity as being nothing more than the belief that one can walk on water and turn water into wine.

SLIPPERY SLOPE

This occurs when someone mistakenly asserts that if we take the first step (accept a belief or practice, or do something), then we CANNOT stop until we hit a horribly objectionable extreme end. I.e., that other steps are INEVITABLE (and these steps are generally awful ones). Just because we can imagine that the first step might lead to a chain of events does not mean that that chain of events must occur. In other words, the claim in Slippery Slope is: Don't do X because if we do X then Y will happen, then Z happens, then A, then B will happen--and B is bad. E.g., a politician commenting on a proposed initiative in San Francisco to abolish the vice squad: "If this passes, San Francisco will be the whorehouse of the nation. There'll be soliciting on the steps of City Hall and lovemaking on Market Street, organized crime will profit and residents and businesses affected. It will be a signal that "anything goes" in San Francisco.

BEGGING THE QUESTION

There are 2 primary forms: #1: Offering, as a premise, a simple restatement of the desired conclusion--A because of B, where B is the same as A (e.g., miracles are impossible because they can't happen). #2: A circular argument--A because of B, where B is dependent on A (requires that you ALREADY believe that A is true). E.g., God exists because it says so in the *Bible*.